WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

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JUST PUBLISHED:

THE FIRE OF GOD'S ANGER:

OR

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WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN MINISTRY.

Our readers will not be surprised at the announcement that the contest for liberty and progress in the Presbyterian Church, which we have for some time been engaged in, has issued in our withdrawal from the church. We foresaw this from the first as a probable result, but the risk and the sacrifice were accepted in the conviction that some one must make a beginning in this work. If we fell as pioneers in the struggle, the path would be pointed out

along which some more successful leader would bring out the church into larger light and liberty.

It will be remembered that last year we asked the Presbytery of West Jersey, with which we had been a long time connected, to advise us: 1, As to the right, under the Constitution of the church, of a minister who was convinced that an error had crept into its system of doctrine at an important point to agitate for its removal: and 2, Whether the discussion of the teachings of the standards upon the question of endless torment which has been carried on in this magazine was so far outside of our privileges and duties in the case that we ought to withdraw from the Presbytery. In response to this request a committee was appointed to consider the whole question, and report a suitable reply. We have already published the answer to our first question (see page 215, Vol. III), conceding the right to introduce such a matter in the ecclesiastical courts. This part of the report was adopted last June. We herewith present the whole report, as amended and finally adopted.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

The Committee, appointed by the Presbytery of West Jersey to advise with the Rev. L. C. Baker, hereby renew the expression of our high esteem for Brother Baker, and our confidence in his piety and in the sincerity of his convictions. Having held two meetings, and sought Divine guidance; having listened to Mr. Baker's oral and written statements; and each member of the Committee having given his written opinion—we do now concur in this answer to the two main questions which were proposed for our consideration, viz.:

First Question. If a minister of this Church has been led to believe that a wrong interpretation of Scripture has crept into our system of doctrine at an important point, what constitu-

tional right has he to agitate for its removal, and what duty in reference thereto is put upon him by his ordination vows?

Answer. It is his first duty to inform his Presbytery of the change in his views. He has a right to bring the subject before the ecclesiastical courts in a regular and constitutional manner. How long, or how far, he may continue the discussion and agitation is a difficult question, and to be decided according to each man's own conscience, remembering his ordination vows, in which he adopted the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and promised to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and the purity and *peace* of the Church.

Second Question. Are the views which Mr. Baker has published from time to time in his magazine, called *Words of Reconciliation*, irreconcilable with our system of doctrine, insomuch that any one holding them should withdraw from the Presbyterian Church?

Answer. Mr. Baker admits an important divergence from the standards. He believes that the death and resurrection of Christ inure to the benefit of the unregenerate, especially the heathen, as well as those who die in a state of regeneration. Resurrection is *redemptive* in its effect.

He says: "This new gift of life brings with it the opportunities of life, but it, nevertheless, is conferred according to the harvest law which prevails in all God's realms of life, and which requires that every man must reap as he has sown, and, 'To every seed its own body.' Such a resurrection, graded as to time and order according to character, gives room for what Scripture teaches concerning a 'resurrection of judgment.' But it makes room also for corrective discipline, and for the possible salvation of those who have not in this life hardened themselves against the Gospel. Incorrigible sinners must incur the second death, which, without dogmatizing, he is inclined to believe, involves the ultimate extinction of all such lives as are hopelessly separated from God, the source of all life."

By Mr. Baker's own admission these views are not in accord with our standards. In our view they are not sus-

tained by the Scriptures. Instead of promoting unity, we fear that the continued agitation of his views will promote division and discord.

We would not repress the liberty of honest investigation respecting the unseen spiritual world, so long as that investigation is conducted in harmony with the teachings of Divine revelation.

We do not maintain the infallibility of *every clause* in the Confession and Catechisms; but we do not think the time has come to attempt a *general* revision, and not even upon this one topic, especially when we remember that the late reunion was effected upon the basis of these standards. If Mr. Baker could hold his peculiar views privately without agitating the church, we would be content to retain the same relation as heretofore to one whom we sincerely love and honor for his piety and ability. But if, as he has intimated to the committee, he cannot cease from a course of agitation, which must unsettle the faith of some and disturb the peace of the church, we believe that it would be more manly, more honorable, and more consistent with his solemn ordination vows first to withdraw from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

When the second part of the report was taken up there was considerable opposition manifested to its passage in the form first presented. It was amended at several points at our suggestion because we declined to accept its *resumé* of our views. And it was agreed on both sides that the matter should be postponed for further consideration. Several brethren hoped that Presbytery would content itself with the fact that the advice asked for had been given by a committee, without their being called upon to adopt the report. And many were anxious for the adoption of some course which would not require the sundering of the tie which bound us to the church. It was, however, mutually agreed that some definite settlement should be reached at the re-

cent spring meeting. On our own part we saw no way in which it could be satisfactorily settled but by definite action on the part of the Presbytery upon our request for advice. We had testified to what we believed to be important truth. We believed the church to be in error at an important point. We had introduced an overture requesting the General Assembly to provide for a re-examination of the Scripture grounds upon which our doctrine of endless torment, now largely ignored among us, was based. We had claimed the right to discuss before the church this issue, and to show from Scripture the point at which the framers of the standards had erred.

When the matter came up for final action we summed up the case from our point of view in the following

ADDRESS.

A year ago I asked the advice of this Presbytery upon two questions of great interest to myself, and of equal interest to the church. As is well known, in WORDS OF RECONCILIATION, a magazine published by me, I had deemed it my duty to call the attention of our church to what seemed to me its false position in holding on tenaciously to certain doctrinal statements in its standards, which had ceased to be a fair and honest expression of its views upon the points involved. It was but a necessary consequence of this position that I should seek to show that the statements in question were based upon a misapprehension of Scripture, and to set forth that principle of Scripture interpretation which was overlooked, and around which as I believed, the whole of the Eschatology of the Reformed Church must sooner or later be reconstructed. This discussion brought me under the reproach of opposing the doctrine of the church at an important point, and of apparent infidelity to my ordination vows. At the same time those vows bound me to seek the purity of the church, and to teach nothing which I believed to be con-

trary to the Word of God. In the strained relations in which I was thus brought to the Presbytery and to the church, two courses were open. I might either wait until some of the brethren would feel constrained to bring the issues involved before the courts of the church by my personal arraignment, or I might take the course authorized by the Assembly of 1878, and myself ask the advice of the Presbytery as to whether I was transcending my constitutional rights in moving, as I had done, for a revision of the Standards, and whether the views concerning human destiny I was teaching were such that I ought to withdraw from its fellowship.

The motives which led me to decline the first course were these. It would involve a long process of litigation as painful to you as to me. The strain and sacrifice required I would however submit to, if it were certain that the questions of Scripture interpretation raised could be settled in the court of Scripture, and the issues involved could be unequivocally met and decided. But anyone who has had experience in our church courts knows how impossible it has hitherto been to carry the appeal back of the Standards which the church has adopted as her authoritative interpretation of Scripture, to the Scriptures themselves.

Moreover, we are aware how difficult it is, through the mass of technicalities and side issues that are likely to be raised, to bring out distinctly before the church the real and living issues of the case. What I might attempt as a contest for the highest interests of the church, and at the sacrifice of everything which a man counts dear in his relation to it, would appear to many as a selfish struggle to maintain my own position in it. If a leading lawyer in this Presbytery, in giving his views upon this case in the local newspaper, can only view it as "Mr. Baker's private and personal quarrel," what hope is there that the average intelligence of the church will be able to discern through the dust raised on the arena of a long church trial the true issue!

I see no sufficient reason therefore for departing from the course entered upon a year ago. And I shall now ask you to give me the advice then asked for, and to come to a decision

upon that item of your committee's report which recommends my withdrawal from the ministry of the Presbyterian church. I thus put myself in your hands, and shall regard your decision as making plain to me the path of duty in the matter. If with any fair degree of unanimity you shall say that you do not believe it consistent in me any longer to hold the place of an accredited minister of this church, I shall at once place my resignation in your hands. I must ask you, however, to take this responsibility, because it would be wrong for me, in the position which I have taken, and which I believe was assumed in obedience to a divine call, to withdraw without such action on your part. I have throughout acted on the view that our church is not a mere association, but a part of the living body of Christ, and that if any one of us become convinced that there is anything wrong in either its constitution or its doctrine, our vows of fealty to it bind us to point out the error and to seek its correction. And therefore I cannot escape my obligations to the church in which God has set me as a member, responsible in my measure for the welfare of the whole, unless you in this way discharge me from them.

But before you decide the question now submitted, permit me again to call your attention to the fact that the personal issue involved is of very small importance compared with the issues which relate to the church at large. I have called in question the correctness of that interpretation of Scripture, put in our Standards, which represents God as having no other end in raising to another life the immense mass of the human race consigned to death and hell for their sins, but to judge and sentence them again to a deeper death and hell, to suffer "most grievous and unspeakable torments, without intermission, with the devil and his angels in hell-fire forever." The point I have raised against this teaching is that it strips resurrection, which is confessedly due to the redeeming work of Christ, of every redemptive and beneficent feature, and converts this provision of another life to the human race into an unutterable curse to all but the elect. The report of your committee affirms that this objection to the Standards is without Scripture warrant. It

virtually endorses and affirms the formulas just quoted. I beseech you, brethren, consider well before, by your vote, you confirm that part of the report. Your responsibilities before God and man in this matter are no less than mine. Are you prepared to say that the Standards have made no mistake at this point, and that the conception of resurrection as a gracious intervention which I have traced through Scripture, and in the light of which I have insisted our authorized teaching ought to be recast, is without foundation in the word of God?

But the question you are to decide is no less important in its relation to the constitution of the Church and the right of private judgment under it. So far as I am aware, this is the first time in the history of our Church that one of its ministers has openly called in question its authorized statements upon an important point of doctrine, and connected therewith an effort to induce the church to revise them. Other instances of difference have occurred, in which the dissentient has assumed that the church is in bondage to an inexorable system, which will not admit of any change, and so has withdrawn from it. In other cases, the effort has been to prove that the Standards are flexible enough to admit the variation. In this instance there is no such attempt. There is the open affirmation that the framers of our Standards at this point erred, and that it is our duty to correct them. And this duty is the more strongly urged, because the church tacitly admits that they erred, inasmuch as these statements are seldom avowed in her pulpits, nor is the impression made upon her hearers that she earnestly believes them. The question, therefore, which you are now asked to decide is unique in our history. Believing as I do, that our church is in an uncandid position before God and man, and that, too, at a point of the most momentous human interest, you are asked to say whether, in seeking to correct this, I have been wrong, and have violated my ordination vows. Moreover, the issue involves the question as to which is master among us, the church or the confession. Is the Presbyterian church a mere voluntary society of Christians, formed to defend and perpetuate a certain system of doctrine, with no room for growth in the knowledge of God

and His Word? Or is it a living body—not a mere society, but a true church? I have held that it enters into the very idea of the body of Christ that it must grow out of all present ignorances and imperfections and divisions into that unity of the faith which shall be the final proof to the world of the divine mission of her Lord. Such growth requires a liberty of investigation and of prophesying—the free action of the Divine Spirit within the body—such as is impossible if the church assumes that she has nothing more to learn, and that she is already able to so map out and fence in the lines of truth that no one must dare pass beyond these limits. It is this aspect of the present case which gives it so much importance, and which has made me hesitate as to whether I ought not to insist upon getting, in some way, the judgment of the whole church upon it. Aside from the truth or falsity of the special principle in eschatology I have been urging, I have been brought reluctantly into a position which represents this most important principle, and one which seems vital to the church's future growth and welfare. You, brethren, have the rare opportunity and the solemn responsibility to decide whether this Presbyterian Church must go on forever on its present lines, or whether it shall hold itself open, in an honest way, to the larger illuminations of truth which God is giving in our day, and so grow up to its place in that larger unity of the future, which is the divine idea of its Lord. If it shall do this, there must be room made for the discussion and amendment of its Standards; there must be no slavish suppression of honest differences; no rod of terror held over the head of honest dissentients, and no such dishonor of the Holy Spirit in the church as is involved in the unwillingness to trust Him to correct the disorders and counteract the errors which may arise in the exercise of His own principle of liberty. Better a hundred fold that some heresies should be propounded than that the healthy life of the church should be repressed by the denial of that liberty of conscience and of prophesying wherewith Christ hath made us free.

It has been in the exercise of this liberty, and under a sense of a sacred obligation to my brethren in this church to which I

have given my life-work, and which I love with a true affection, that I have sought to give them the new light upon the darkest feature in God's Word which He has given me. I knew it could not, when understood, but sweeten their own lives, and brighten their labors for God and their fellow men, giving them a gospel of deeper divine love and of larger human hopes, and one far better fitted for the church's great mission work at home and abroad; a gospel needed to lift the piety of our church out of the narrow and provincial grooves in which it has been confined, and to prepare it for its place in that larger church of the future in which our Lord's last prayer for His people shall be fulfilled, "that they all may be one." And in doing this, I have seen that some one must assert for himself and for his brethren, the right to open up our system to any larger light that may be shining outside of it, and to emancipate the church from the idea that its ministers are the mere servants of the Confession and not its proper masters.

However it may seem to you, I am persuaded that in this effort I have been acting in the highest interest of the church; and that if you insist that I ought to lay down my ecclesiastical life in the struggle, God will raise up other and better leaders to carry this cause on to victory.

And now brethren I have only to say that, however you may decide this question, my personal feelings toward you and toward all by brethren in the Presbyterian church will remain unchanged. I thank you most heartily for your forbearance and courtesy in this whole matter. No service for this church has ever cost me half what this last service has. Between me and those of you who cannot regard it as a service but an injury, God must be the judge. I ask you now to separate this question from the personal interests involved, and to decide it in the court of your own consciences as before Him who holds us all to strict account, and especially when we act under the solemn responsibilities of His servants in His own house. Permit me to suggest that if the interests involved seem to you too important to be settled by a single Presbytery, our Book makes it easy to obtain a wider judgment of the church through a refer-

ence to either the Synod or General Assembly for advice. It declares that to them "it belongeth ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience."

The discussion on both sides was earnest and protracted. It is a matter of thankfulness that it was free from bitterness. One brother who could not attend the meeting sent an earnest, affectionate, letter to the Presbytery pleading for toleration and against the adoption of the report. This letter was allowed to be read. Four other ministers, as highly esteemed as any in the Presbytery, one of them a Nestor among us—took the same view. One of these made an eloquent and touching appeal, not only against our withdrawal, but for the toleration of our views with which he declared himself to be in substantial accord. One of the most intelligent and godly elders declared that his heart told him we were right, and that a larger view of the truth concerning God's relation to mankind lies somewhere in the direction we had pointed out, and that he must vote no. The report, however, was finally adopted, all the others, fifty-five in all, voting for it. After which Mr. Baker arose and said that the vote had made plain to him the path of duty. He had desired to remain within the church, because he believed that God had given him a testimony to it concerning its false position in holding on to formulas of doctrine which were no longer heartily believed and preached among us. He had striven to get the Presbytery to bring the matter to the attention of the General Assembly, and to arouse the church through the press to its importance. He had not, however, assailed these traditional formulas without seeking to show just where they are wrong, namely, in their misconception of the meaning of

the provision to restore another life to the human race out of the pit of death and hell into which it was cast by the primal sin. He had striven to preach throughout the Presbyterian Church the gospel of the resurrection of the dead, without which it is impossible to understand the Old Testament, or to measure the gospel of the grace of God as unfolded in the New. It was now plain to him that there was no room for such a work within the limits of the Presbyterian system. He sincerely loved that church itself. But we could no longer affiliate with its system. He therefore desired now to resign his ministry under it. The resignation was accepted, and he was allowed peacefully to withdraw.

It is due to the brethren who took this action that their spirit was throughout kindly and Christian. Several expressed their deep regret at the separation, and deplored it as a necessity forced upon them by their views of what fidelity to the church, and to the truth, as they received it, required. Earnest prayers were offered for Divine guidance and blessing upon us in the future. And thus, with scarcely a tinge of acrimony in the conferences and discussions that led to this issue, but in a spirit of mutual respect and love, separation was effected. Most heartily we joined in the prayers offered that God would give both to us and to them a truer understanding of His word, and reveal to both the truth in the things about which we differ.

A circumstance that lost us some votes was this: Near the close of the debate the pastor of the church in which Presbytery was convened, and who had formerly been a stout defender of our principle of liberty, arose and announced that he felt compelled to change his purpose and vote with the majority. He

represented that there had come to his ears reports of ungodly men who were making sport of the controversy then going on, and taking comfort in our doctrine as a relief from the awful sanctions with which the Bible invests future punishment. Some who were wavering, and one who had announced his purpose to vote in the negative, were at once drawn over to that side. But this good brother did not stop to consider that we also teach a doctrine of future punishment which, when understood, must carry conviction to the reason and consciences of men, as the old doctrine does not and cannot. He forgot also how many sons of the church from godly households have been driven into infidelity and sin by their revolt against the old doctrine. The very men who were then scoffing had lived long under the dark shadow of a false view of God. No man can be brought to God until he sees that He is not a God of hate but of love. A man whose life has been lived under the restraints of these dreadful views of God as the relentless tormentor of His creatures with unspeakable torments to endless ages cannot, when these restraints are lightened, be expeced at once to take right views of either His holiness or His love. But we claim that the old docrine is largely responsible for this state of things. It terrorizes men by a perverted view of God, until right moral conduct is impossible. For everything in right conduct and in spiritual life depends upon a right knowledge of God. It is confidently asserted by Universalists that there is a lower percentage of criminals among those brought up in their churches and Sunday-schools than among those trained in other churches. We have no means of knowing how far this claim is true, but we can well understand that it *may* be true. We would far rather trust to the results upon any community of an *over*-statement of the doctrine of God's forgiving love than depend upon such distortion of His retributive justice. No one who rightly understands our teaching could ever imagine that it opens the door to indulgence in sin in this life. If it ought to be repressed on this ground, then the story of the woman taken in adultery, the parable of the prodigal son, our Lord's last prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers ought to be stricken from the Bible.

The question is, Which is true—the Westminster doctrine of an implacable God, inflicting everlasting torments on the creatures of His hands, or the doctrine of a Lord God, merciful and gracious, even though He will by no means clear the guilty; finding a way to restore life to man even out of the depths of that death and hell to which His righteousness must consign him for his sins, and yet never abating His wrath against sin, nor lowering for anyone, nor in any world, His terms, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

It is frequently said that these formulas are no more harsh than the words of the loving Saviour himself, and that they are largely made up from His words. We have repeatedly shown in this magazine that the Standards make use of His words out of their connection, that words spoken to disciples to enjoin upon *them* the law of self-mortification as the way of life are treated as warnings addressed to the multitude against being cast into hell "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," and that the judgment-scene of Matthew xxv, which relates to a judgment of mankind now going on toward its consummation, is treated as something delayed until after a general resurrection of the dead. Thus the gospel of the resurrection, which is the God-given light thrown over all these dark passages, is entirely obscured. The "appalling sentences" of the Confession are thus made up of misunderstood and misapplied and wrongly-located phrases, put together in a gloomy age and under a dark sky, from which the light of a true "hope toward God that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust" (Acts xxiv. 15) was shut out.

The small number of votes against our withdrawal is not surprising when we consider how much it costs a Presbyterian minister to antagonize his system. We make no charges of disloyalty to conscience against any one. But conscience moves slow against the tremendously repressive power of such a system, and of an adverse public opinion.

One member of Presbytery remarked that we had exposed the Standards to ridicule. We defy any one to point out the place in these pages, or elsewhere, where our language will bear that construction. The worst that we have done to expose their statements about endless torment to reprobation has been in simply printing the statements themselves. No more damaging thing could happen to the Presbyterian Church than to have their authoritative teaching on this subject spread upon the pages of every journal in the land. In seeking to arouse the church to the dishonesty of her position we were obliged to often quote these formulas, which one of the most honored members of Presbytery described as "the most appalling sentences in the English language." Surely no right-minded person would employ ridicule upon such an awful theme. Nothing more is needed to excite the repulsion of the intelligent mind and loving heart of a Christian than to read the sentences themselves.

We are increasingly convinced that the ability to receive truth comes from God. Men may be plied with the strongest and most sufficient arguments, but their force will be lost unless the eye of the soul is open to the light. It is in vain that truth is forced upon men beyond their preparation of heart to receive it.

It is surprising how the Pharisaic temper reappears in every age. To nothing were the old Jews more averse than to the ideas, which God sent special prophets to promulgate, that His mercies flowed beyond them to the Gentiles. The Pharisees rejected and crucified Jesus for teaching the wider grace of God. They stirred up a clamor against Paul wherever he went for preaching salvation from God to the Gentiles. Even the first apostles had to be taught these wider reaches of God's mercy to mankind by special revelation. With surprise they were constrained to confess, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." A chosen people is always reluctant to admit that the blessings vouchsafed to them can flow out into other channels. It is in just this spirit that the Presbyterian Church

has received our testimony of blessing stored up for all mankind in the provision to raise all from the dead, and that the elect of this age are only a royal priesthood, from whom, as a centre, the salvation of God is to flow out in far wider circles in the ages to come.

Since making up our account of the action of Presbytery the letter we there refer to has been sent to us by its author, with a special request that it be published as a part of the record in the case, and as affording him the opportunity to let the public know how he stands. We do not deserve all that this dear brother says of us, but we give his letter entire, as he requests.

Mr. Moderator and Brethren of the Presbytery: An absentee perforce from your Assembly, I can neither hear nor participate in your deliberations. There is, however, one subject, likely to engage your attention, in the face of which I neither wish nor dare to shirk responsibility. And it is for the sake of my own conscience, and not in the conceit of affecting your judgment, that I request the reading of this communication.

As among the possibilities of the present meeting, I dread the taking of certain action, whose issue shall be either the silencing of that periodical known as *Words of Reconciliation*, or the withdrawal of its editor from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

It were impertinent to remind you that Brother Baker is worthy of all respect, confidence, and love, whether considered in the light of his Christian worth, disinterested honesty, or rich erudition. You, who are veterans in the Presbytery, best know and honor him, and your esteem is in the direct ratio of your knowledge. Whatever repulse you might offer him for the sake of his literary work, would react most painfully upon your own hearts. Withdrawing yourself from him, you would do so only under the pressure of what seemed to you most pitiless necessity. But, more than I can express, I wish this necessity did

not appear to many so real, and so commanding of obedience, in the sacrifices it demands. I wish our Presbyterian temple were built with a Court of the Prophets, where the deeper and more solemn thoughts of worthy men might not only be freely uttered, but received in the same spirit in which they were given.

Would that there were a Jerusalem Chamber, which might be fearlessly re-opened and re-visited, at least by such as being moved, beyond the multitude, with the desire to get at truth first-hand, set themselves earnestly to read and understand the Scriptures as the one infallible rule of faith and practice, and so conmune one with another and with the church at large. Believing in my heart that there is much work that might profitably engage the industry of a second Westminster Assembly, and that it is destined to be done by one means or another, and thankful to have any such work, in however fragmentary shape, in the hands of men who are spiritually minded, and loyal in adherence to both the spirit and letter of Scripture, and not rudely iconoclastic as regards the old and established, I have no wish to see the magazine in question transferred beyond the limits of our own communion. Still less have I any conscience to condemn it, or any heart to vote in the direction of its removal. I believe that such teaching as that of Norman McLeod was God's good gift to the Scotch Establishment; and that in such men as Maurice, Farrar, and Brooks, permitted by their colleagues to pursue their work without discouragement, many of the true things that are so old that they sound like *new*, have come out into the light of these latter days; and one is glad to feel that, even if the ruling majority in our own church cannot conscientiously allow standing room for teachers of this stamp, place *is*, nevertheless, found for them *somewhere* in the great Christian household.

But, as long as a man is led to undertake and follow out his study upon the same broad foundation as that which the Confesion of Faith claims for itself, namely, "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only infallible rule of faith and practice," *is* it a mistake that he *is* and *works* in the Presbyterian church?

And to this question permit me to subscribe my emphatic though, doubtless, insignificant, No.

With the prayer that the Holy Ghost may attend your deliberations and dictate your decisions,

I am, your fellow Presbyter,

LEONIDAS E. COYLE.

The following letter from a member of Presbytery fairly illustrates the feeling under which the decision was reached.

Dear Brother Baker:

It went to my heart to vote against your remaining in our Presbyterian ministry the other night. We shall miss your face and your counsel in Presbytery sadly. It was only a sense of duty to our Lord and his work that led me to vote as I did. I meant to have added when I spoke the other night that I believed it was your duty to preach and teach the gospel as you understand it, only understanding it as you do, not as a Presbyterian minister. The Lord bless and guide you wherever you go, and enlighten your eyes and all our eyes in the knowledge of His word.

Your brother in Christ,

We have no other than the kindest feelings toward our brethren who voted in this way. The very question we were putting to the test was whether the Presbyterian system admits of any broadening at this point. If the church should officially decide that her Confessional teachings of an everlasting torment after resurrection cannot be questioned or reviewed, nor the possibility of any form of change or hope in the state of all who die out of this life unsaved be admitted, then we had no desire to remain in its ministry. We could not conscientiously do so. It was a question with us between the claims of a "system" and the welfare of the church which had adopted it, between fealty to the Standards and to the Word of God upon which they are professedly based. We felt in honor bound before leaving the church to make an effort for its deliverance from a false position, and from bondage to its traditions. Our brethren gave us

no countenance in this effort. They doubtless have done what they felt bound to do. We have done the same. God must judge betwen us. We part from them with the kindest feeling and join most heartily in the prayer with which this letter closes.

DIVINE LOVE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

We wish that every minister of the Presbyterian Church could read the article with this heading in the last number of the *Presbyterian Review*, written by Prof. E. L. Curtis, of the McCormick Theological Seminary. He shows, first, how the Old Testament reveals God's love for *man* as His creature and child. The fall did not abrogate that love, but opened up other channels for its fuller manifestation; whilst toward the people whom He had chosen, God's love is shown to be everlasting and unchanging.

"Though man may be unstable and changeable toward God, there is no change in the Divine purpose of love. 'I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' Though in justice God might be compelled to scatter and punish His people for their great and manifold sins, yet He would not cast them off forever.

"This fact of God's wondrous love and faithfulness—a love that knew no limit, a faithfulness whose compassion no wandering child could ever annul—is the golden thread running through the Old Testament, binding it all together. The prophets, in warning, rebuking, and threatening, ever have this in mind. The outline of all their writings is guilt, judgment, and redemption. This redemption is proof of the unwavering love of God. Language in this connection seems almost inadequate to convey the intensity of the passion and yearning which Jehovah had for His people. Hosea lived in a time when there was no regard for truth or mercy, and no knowledge of God; when the grossest

immorality—even violent deeds of bloodshed—was most common. Yet, even to the people of such an ungodly character, he brought a message from God full of the tenderest love and feeling, declaring that Jehovah's heart was turned within Him, and His compassions were kindled together, and He would not execute the fierceness of His anger—He would not destroy them—for He was God, and not man—the Holy One in the midst of them. He would heal their backsliding; He would love them freely.

"We find, also, in Hosea, in the parable of the unfaithful wife, the most beautiful and tender declaration of love in the Old Testament, equalling, one can say, if not surpassing, that of the parable of the prodigal son in the New. Out of his own bitter experience, out of his own compassion and love, Hosea was taught by the Holy Spirit the love of Jehovah. In the likeness of his own unfaithful wife, he saw unfaithful Israel. Jehovah chastises His people, and puts them away from Him for a season, yet He restores them unto Himself; and how wondrous is the love with which He does it! In infinite tenderness and compassion, in complete perfect forgiveness, Jehovah says, "I will betroth me unto thee in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and tender mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord."

Professor Curtis then goes on to show how there are given frequent intimations that God's love is too wide to be confined within these special limitations to Israel. He instances the case of Nineveh, as given in the Book of Jonah, the declaration in the Book of Amos that God had not only watched over the infancy of the nation of Israel, but of the Philistines, bringing them from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir, as he brought Israel from Egypt. "Still more strikingly is this wider mercy shown in the promises of the future, when Egypt and Assyria are to be united with Israel as recipients of the Divine blessing, and

even the wretched Sodom will have a restoration along with Jerusalem. (Ezek. xvi)."

We can only regret that the writer of this article fails to see, or if he sees, fails to state that these wide promises of mercy to apostate Israel and to the Gentiles must find their ultimate fulfilment in a recovery of both these classes of mankind from the dead. They must first go down to death under the just judgment of God for their sins. But in the Book of Hosea, from which he draws impressive proofs of his theme, it is directly stated (xiii. ch.), that Jehovah's redemption of Israel must have this issue: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from Sheol." It is a constant surprise to us that men can write in this way of the wide scope of God's grace, and fail to perceive that His provision to restore mankind from the pit of death into which it has fallen by sin, is the very way, and the only way, by which these promises are to be made good. That God should extend any sort of mercy to any class of wicked men after death, seems to them a denial of the gospel. Whereas the very foundations of the gospel, as laid in the Old Testament, are destroyed if this be denied.

EASTER JOY.

The obstacle, which, above all others, hinders our brethren from perceiving that there is a "hope toward God" in even the resurrection of the unjust (Acts xxiv, 15) and which, therefore, beclouds in them true Easter joy, is a wrong notion of both death and resurrection. They assume that death is continued life, that man is essentially immor-

tal, and that he never can experience a cessation of being. Resurrection, therefore, means but little in such a view. It is no recovery to life, no re-endowment with the prerogatives and opportunities lost in death. And yet if Scripture is plain on any point, it is on this—that man rises again to another life beyond the grave only because Christ arose. St. Paul declares flatly that if Christ be not risen, even Christians—they that have fallen asleep in Christ—are *perished.* His use of the word "perished" here is not a doubtful one. He does not mean to say that such are left to a hopeless eternity of misery, but that they have ceased to be. No other meaning is possible when he says that without resurrection-hope, we might as well eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we *die.* It is, therefore, because so many have ceased to attach to death its true significance that they have lost the true meaning and hope of resurrection as essentially a recovery. It is a crime against humanity in our modern eschatology that it has robbed it of its true Easter joy. It has stripped the gospel of its large human hopes by converting God's redemption of the race to another life beyond the grave into a provision for perpetuating the existence of the bulk of mankind in endless torment. Why raise men out of death, which is the wages of their sin—its true and fixed penalty—if there be no beneficent purpose in their resurrection?

OPPORTUNITIES LIMITED BY DEATH.

Undoubtedly the main obstacle in the way of Christians receiving the full gospel of the resurrection is the many intimations of Scripture that this life is decisive of destiny.

These will not suffer them to admit that where there has been failure in this life, there can be any blessing in the provision of another life beyond the grave.

We are not disposed to conceal the force of the many passages which teach the decisiveness of this present life. On the contrary we have uniformly taught that the Christian has a crown to gain which he can only gain here and now, and that before the sinner there is a destruction to be shunned which can only be escaped here and now. The Christian has a present life—a soul—to be saved. And so the sinner has a present life endowment—a soul—which he must lose unless he finds salvation in Christ. Death does not prolong for him this issue. It decides it. The point we have raised is this. Is this loss of being and of manhood in death final and endless? Or does resurrection recover the lost spirit in its own time and order and invest it again with the prerogatives of that form of being which we call man, and out of which it was ejected by death into the outer darkness. We say such recovery lies in the very idea of resurrection, and makes it what it claims to be, a boon procured for the death-smitten human race by the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. And yet we have also insisted that this is not a recovery of unjust men to eternal life—a gift they never possessed—only to a life and form of being which is still under judgment and on trial, and whose opportunities and capacities will be according to character. The Christian never loses life, or "his soul." He is already "risen with Christ," "passed from death unto life." But the sinner loses this priceless heritage. He suffers a definite damnation. He goes into the prison-house of death, the sheol or hell of Scripture,

with its darkness, its privations, its pangs of dissolution. Whether, therefore, men shall escape this doom and "be saved," or whether they must go down to this destruction, and undergo the hazards which attend even their recovery to another life, is an issue which, for all who hear the gospel at least, must be decided here and now. And this is all that is involved in the passages of Scripture to which we have referred. They truly set forth the decisiveness of this present life, and these present gospel opportunities. But they nowhere teach that over the night of the death which they threaten, no light of hope will ever arise through a resurrection out of death.

PRESENT NEED OF SALVATION.

Another objection to our doctrine in many minds is that it seems to favor procrastination, and to diminish the necessity of immediate application to Christ, the only Saviour. Why not wait, it is said, for the next chance beyond the grave?

If the main thing in salvation is escape from punishment, there might be some force in this objection. But if it be essentially deliverance from the sin that brings punishment, then there can be no relief from the suffering until there be separation from the sin. We may be sure of this, that penalty will last as long as the sin lasts. No one can believe this more strongly than do we. We often hear this as a sufficient statement of the orthodox position. We most heartily accept it. Retribution is as sure as gravitation. And therefore the necessity of salva-

tion from sin, in our view, is an immediate necessity. We have shown above that there is a bankruptcy of being, a loss of body and soul in hell before resurrection, from which we must *now* be saved. And not even resurrection out of this death will bring salvation to a man to whom sin still cleaves. And God has but one way of curing a man of this disease. If he dies now unsaved, not even God's remedy can reach him until he has been taken all to pieces and dissolved in death. God must, so to speak, begin His work over again with such a man.

SELECTIONS FROM DEAN PLUMPTRE.

"It must be remembered that our Lord recognized also another of the beliefs which were accepted by those to whom He spoke. When He told them of the prison from which a man should not escape till he had paid the uttermost farthing" (Matt. v. 26, xviii. 34); of the servant who knew not his Lord's will, and should be beaten with few stripes (Luke xii. 48); of the more tolerable penalty for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. xi. 21); of all sin and wickedness but one being forgiven, either in this world or the world to come (Matt. xii. 31), 32), His words could not fail to seem to those who heard them to be almost an echo of those which taught that some souls might descend into Gehenua, and remain there for a time mourning for their evil deeds, and then rise up again. Even the parable in which the terrors of the unseen world

were set forth in the most appalling vividness, represented the sufferer as having at last learned to care, more than he had done in his lifetime, for the welfare of others, of the father of the faithful still recognizing the sufferer in Hades as his son (Luke xvi). To those who were familiar with the thought that there was a curable as well as an incurable evil, there must have been something suggestive in the fact that the word which He chose (kolasis) even for the aionian punishment was one which carried with it, strictly interpreted, the thought that it was inflicted for the sake of the sufferer, and not merely to work out the retribution, however righteous, awarded by the Avenger.

"Among the Jews whom the Apostles addressed, and which, so far as they do not protest against it, it may fairly be supposed they shared, there was an anticipation, more or less distinct, of the work which the Messiah whom they expected was to carry to completion in that world of the souls of the dead. Thus we read (Emek Hamelech, fol. 138, c, 4), that the Son of David would pass through hell, to redeem those who were there under comdemnation; that when the condemned saw the light of the Messiah, they, prepared to receive Him, cried out, Here is one who will redeem us out of the kingdom of darkness, as has been spoken by the prophet, 'I will deliver them from hell and redeem them from death' (Hosea xiii. 14); and as Isaiah foretold 'The redeemed of the Lord will return, and will come again with singing unto Sion.'"

"The outcome of what I have endeavored to present is, I take it, that there has been a constant drift during the last

three centuries to a wider hope, to a larger charity, to a more cautious reticence. Routine or sensational preachers may use the old language, but the great masters of theology, though at first they may anathematize each other's creed, at last come to understand how much they hold in common. They can hardly realize the force of the current by which they have been borne along. They seem to forget how different the language of the majority of Christian teachers in the past from what they now represent as the teaching of all Christendom."

"'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectations
Eventually to follow—as the sea
Waits ages in its bed, till some one wave,
But of the multitude, aspires, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet, perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time; thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gain."

—*Robert Browning.*

BIBLE STUDY.

Our minds cannot *grow* without ideas, and ideas are worth nothing unless formed into *individual* views, and—thank God that it is so—individual views that are our own, and so growing and germinant, are obtained *only by work*—by *my* work for them. "The Son of God has given

us an understanding *that we may know*"—"not the knowledge is given," says one, "but the ability, the power and the opportunity to gain the knowledge." "If the intellectual possessions of the present," says another, a great secular writer, "are not to melt under our hands they must be acquired anew;" and he goes on to quote from another, "What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it that you may possess it."

All this is of greater importance in biblical matters by as much as they rise into vastly more enduring significance. God would have us busy at His book, honestly busy, busy through our own powers. Inherited wealth, we often say, is not a blessing, where it stands in the way of its possessor learning anything for himself. Too much seeing through other's eyes, learning through other's toil, may prove the most delusive kind of seeing and learning. If our Christianity is to become strong it must cease as soon as possible to be fed with a spoon. How long we puzzled in years gone by over the fact of *so much* Bible. Why was it not the *little* book that many practically make it? Why, we answer in reply, was not the land of Canaan the contracted region in the centre of Palestine that it threatened to become? Because they needed the training and discipline of the whole gift of promise. Not Judah alone, nor Reuben alone, nor Naphtali alone, but each and all must fight till the whole land was in possession. "Nor can a Christian rest in anything which has been already gained. New acquisitions of knowledge, new modes of thought, new forms of society, are always calling for interpretation, for recognition, for adjustment."—*Prof. W. W. Lovejoy.*

APOLOGY.

An apology is due to our subscribers for the discreditable printing of the last number. Our former printer gave up business at the beginning of the year, and we were induced to transfer the work to a new office just beginning business, which proved to be not properly equipped for it. We bore with the mistakes in the February and March numbers in the hope that the disadvantages under which the work was being done would disappear. The April number was hurriedly printed before we had been given our usual opportunity to revise the proof, and we were mortified to see it appear with numerous blunders, which must have made it anything but pleasant reading to our subscribers. We have made new arrangements with an old established office, and hope there will be nothing to complain of in the future.

Errata.—These were so marked in the last number as in many places to obscure the sense. We note some of the more serious.

Insert quotation marks before "There is" on p. 98, and after "pure" on page 99.

On 17th line, page 99, insert "is the" before "principle."

On page 101, 6th line, insert "of the" after "statement."

On 8th line insert "the hope" before "itself."

On page 102, 8th line, read "which" before "centers," and on 6th line "strait" for "straight."

On page 103, 9th line, insert "larger" before "hope."

On page 121, line 13, read "ages" for "eyes."

On page 122, line 23, read "divided" for "divine."

On page 123, 3rd line from bottom, read "love" for "lore."

Transfer paragraph at bottom of 124th page to bottom of 125, and omit dash.

NOTES ON CURRENT TOPICS.

PRAYER FOR CHURCH UNION.—The Good Friday service held in Philadelphia for this purpose was not all that we could have desired. It was lacking in the elements of confession of the sins which have brought discords and divisions in the one body, and there was a lack of specific prayer that God would show us all at what points we have gone astray, and reveal to us the truth as to the things in which we differ. But there were strong desires for closer fellowship; there was the manifestation of love which is the bond of perfectness.

We cannot but hope that there has been set an example in Philadelphia which will be widely followed throughout the country. Our readers will remember how often the earnest desire for just such a meeting has been expressed in this magazine. We have all along felt that church union could come in this way alone—by spontaneous gatherings of Christians of different names to confess the sin and ignorance of division, and to seek from God that larger illumination and more unselfish love before which even frowning barriers which now separate us would disappear. Such a mighty impulse to this movement will some day be given from the Spirit of God. The times are ripe for it now. We are not aware that any meeting of precisely this character has ever before been held. There have been many friendly conferences over the subject of church union, and many earnest prayers for it. But this is the only instance we have known of, in which all the Christian people of a large city have been invited to come together to pray that the Lord would bring us and His whole church into that perfect unity for which He prayed, and in which so many leading pastors, including the Bishop of the church which has heretofore been regarded as the most exclusive among Protestants, united their hearts and voices for this end. May God grant that this cloud, now no bigger than a man's hand, may soon overspread the sky, and pour down its blessings upon the whole land.

The Princetonian, in giving the account of the recent meeting at Cincinnati of the Alumni of Princeton College, speaks of the speech of President Patton, who was present, as follows:

"He began to outline what he hoped Princeton University would be, and the duties of its President, as he understood them. Here was the especially meaning part of the address. No one present will forget the man and his manner when he said in this connection, while the thin lips straightened and the spare figure drew itself up, and the syllables came with slow, distinct utterance "We will submit to no ecclesiastical dictation in matters of philosophy. We will not read Aquinas because the Pope says so. And we will read Spencer if we want to."

It appears to us that this is the same kind of thing that we have just been condemned for. We believe, however, that the right way of liberty in the Presbyterian Church is to make room within the church for its *honest* exercise. If but a few of the leaders of the church who believe in the principle of liberty had been willing to follow that principle to its logical results, and had spoken out their real convictions, the issue of our contest for that principle would have been a very different one.

It is impossible for us to interpret the Old Testament in any other way than as conveying a promise that, beyond the death and destruction which God must visit on men and nations for their sins, He will raise up to another life these banished ones. All our Saviour's words about retribution must be interpreted as subordinate to this great promise, although He further teaches that this new gift of life can be freed from penalty and become a blessing only as it is freed from sin.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

A devoted Christian lady, who has been long a member of the Presbyterian Church, writes to us from the vicinity of New York:

I enclose my subscription for another year for your valuable periodical; also an amount sufficient for me to receive with it a copy of "The Fire of God's Anger." From my heart I wish you God-speed in your effort to emancipate the Presbyterian Church, of which I have been a member for more than fifty years, from the "orthodox muddle," which makes it a spectacle to the world, and is rapidly alienating the present generation whose ancestors have been its devoted adherents. I have been taking ——— the past year, but I much prefer your magazine, as I can unhesitatingly pass it around among my friends. I am praying most earnestly to be kept from error, and to be led into all truth. I presume you are familiar with the "Life and Letters of Thomas Erskine." He cherished most decidedly the larger hope. I had the pleasure of meeting socially Archdeacon Farrar when he was visiting this country. His simple, earnest piety increased my confidence that he had received his commission to write his comforting book on "Eternal Hope" from the great Head of the Church. The Bible has become increasingly precious to me since I have received, I believe, from a Divine source, the blessed, restful assurance that God's purposes of mercy are as wide as the human race. Again, wishing you God-speed in your noble, praiseworthy mission, I am yours, in the hope of His coming, who is the vanquisher of sin, the grave and hell.

A co-presbyter writes concerning the late meeting of Presbytery:

I feared there would be little declaration on the side of broader eschatology. I suppose "its hour is not yet," as Phillips Brooks has significantly applied the text to various morning-star stages of reforms. When I awoke this morning, with my first thoughts concerning the affair came Galileo's words: "And yet it moves." I wonder if any one supposes that such Presbyterial action can really stay growing convictions, or make the fictitious unanimity any more substantial? And I wonder if the conscience of the Church *can* much longer stand this sham? Is it not queer how persons will in one breath declare their conviction that the Standards are faulty and should be revised, and in the next exclaim, with reference to work like yours, "Our Sumpter has been fired upon, and we must defend it?"